

Texas Obesity Research Center

Preventive Health Behaviors among Hispanics: Comparing A US-Mexico Border Cohort and National Sample

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Adherence to preventive health behaviors for chronic diseases would avert 80% of all heart disease, stroke, type II diabetes, and more than 40% of cancer cases. The purpose of this study is to describe the preventive health behaviors for chronic diseases among Mexican Americans residing along U.S.-Mexico border and in the U.S. **Methods:** Descriptive statistics and chi-square tests were conducted on two rich data sets for Mexican Americans. The first data set (n=1439) was from the Cameron County Hispanic Cohort (CCHC), a prospective cohort study of Mexican American adults aged 18 years and older living in a large and poor city along the Texas- Mexico border. The second data set was the Hispanic Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) for 2009, a national random sample telephone survey (n=30075). **Results:** In the CCHC, the sample (67.06% female) has a mean age of 48.06 ± 15.60 years, 48.81% employed, 45.66% has less than high school education, 77.57% chose to complete the survey in Spanish, and 31.65% has some type of public or private insurance. In the Hispanic BRFSS data, 63.59% were female with mean age of 48.34 ± 16.87 years, 30.47% have less than high school education, 49.02% employed, and 44.96% chose the Spanish language survey. We found more than 70% of Mexican Americans in the BRFSS data are overweight or obese, and more than 85% of the Mexican Americans along the border are overweight or obese. Less than 45% of Mexican Americans in either sample meet physical activity guidelines, and less than 25% in either sample meet fruit and vegetable daily intake guidelines. Statistically, significantly fewer Mexican Americans along the US Mexico border meet either guideline compared to Mexican Americans sampled nationally ($p<.0001$). **Conclusions:** Nationally, but particularly true among Mexican Americans along the Texas-Mexico border, the majority of Mexican Americans had poor preventive health behaviors and are at risk for multiple non-communicable chronic diseases.

KEY WORDS: Mexican Americans, Physical Activity, Dietary Guidelines,
Preventive Health Behavior